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WELLNESS

I'VE BEEN TO 21 SPAS IN THE MALDIVES. HERE ARE 15 OF MY FAVORITES

Caviar, crystals, 24-carat magic and more in glass-bottom spa rooms and with #viewsfordays. Head-to-toe so player all across these wellness destinations in the Maldives.



Jul 14, 2021

THE PLEASURE PARADISE MALDIVES isn't short on indulgences, and when it comes to relaxing, there isn't a better place in the world to enjoy a spa session. Or, say, two dozen. Over the past 2½ years, I've been to 21 spas scattered throughout the atolls. I've tried massages from Ayurvedic to Hawaiian. I've been covered in mud, rubbed into clayform, soothed my sunburns away and let my nose lead the way to my treatment choice. From glass-bottom treatment rooms to 007-Goldfinger facials to hydrotherapy pools with the most insane views, the Maldives has some of the world's best spas. Here are 15 of my favorites.

JOALI Spa by ESPA at JOALI





Courtesy of JOALI Spa by ESPA (3)

The spa has signature experiences designed by ESPA, like a 60-minute Inner Beauty Facial and a 90-minute Mindful Massage. I had my Synchronized Vitality Massage in one of their two obviously-in-high-demand overwater spa treatment rooms. Before my massage began, I had to (*had to!*) spend some time in the treatment room's sauna with floor-to-ceiling views of the Indian Ocean.

joali.com

Baglioni Spa at Baglioni Resort Maldives



Courtesy of Baglioni Resort Maldives (2)

It's no surprise that Italian culture is deeply entrenched in everything Baglioni does, including its spa. It's evident in the unique Famiglia Family Treatment for three to four people and the Sogno Lifting Facial, meaning dream in Italian.

While pretty much everything will lull you into a post-pasta-like coma, the Baglioni Bath with milk and honey is sublime. But my favorite part of the pampering was the spa's open-air wood pavilions set among the island's chirping jungle.

baglionihotels.com



Courtesy of The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort

Designed to look like a sea creature from above, the overwater Iridium Spa serves up a variety of posh treatments like the Caviar Journey, finished off with, you guessed it, caviar.

But once you catch a glimpse of its Blue Hole Pool, it's tough to find a more captivating place to relax. One of the largest hydrotherapy pools in the country, this bright blue infinity pool set against the turquoise water and azure blue skies might just be my favorite pool of all time. It's a great place for a soak and the obligatory Instagram photoshoot.

[marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)

Duniye Spa at Vilamendhoo Island Resort & Spa



Courtesy of Vilamendhoo Island Resort & Spa

A light breeze coming off the Indian Ocean and the waves lapping against the wood floor beneath you are enough to soothe you into a meditative state. Pair that with a 75-minute Himalayan Salt Stone Therapy, and you're practically floating off the treatment bed.

After way too much sun on my fragile New England-raised complexion, I needed a Tropical Breeze Cooler aloe wrap to help soothe and repair my damaged skin. And, boy, did it do the trick.

vilamendhoo.com

Soneva Spa at Soneva Jani



Courtesy of Soneva Jani

The Maldives' version of *Waterworld* (but way, way nicer) means practically everything is overwater, including the spa. Whitewashed wood with pops of color and glass-bottom holes under the treatment beds greet those in need of some R&R.

Sophisticated treatments like Sodashi facials and Vitamin IV therapies are paired with natural Ayurvedic treatments at their new Ayurvedic Champa steps from the waves. The spa menu is so long that picking a treatment was the hardest decision I had to make the entire stay.

soneva.com/resorts/soneva-jani

Anantara Spa at Anantara Dhigu



Courtesy of Anantara Dhigu

A cooling towel and a warm smile await at every Anantara Spa in the Maldives, and this one is no different. The six supremely private thatched-roof overwater teak pavilions offer ethereal views of their crystal-clear lagoon, one of the best in the Maldives.

While I get giddy over choosing my scented essential oil for a signature Aroma Massage, I also get a Dead-Sea Mud Massage and it's the only time I'm more than happy to be covered in dirt.

anantara.com/en/dhigu-maldives

Lux* Me Spa at Lux* North Male Atoll Resort & Villas



Courtesy of Lux North Male Atoll Resort & Villas (2)*

The South Beach vibe carries throughout the resort and into the spa. But don't worry, there's no thumping music and overpriced cabanas; it's just pure relaxation. The spacious, square treatment rooms set against the blindingly aqua ocean have glass bottoms for watching the fish swim by and a picture-perfect soaking tub.

To my delight, the therapist focused heavily on my problem areas (my feet and hands), an ask that is always written down, but rarely done.

luxresorts.com/en/maldives/hotel/luxnorthmaleatoll

Spa by JW at JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa



Courtesy of JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa

They say smell is the strongest human sense. When I arrived for my aromatherapy massage at the Spa by JW, my nose dictated my essential oil. Here I learned that instead of choosing an oil-based on what I thought I wanted the massage to do for my body, my nose should dictate what kind of massage my body really needed.

So, instead of a lemongrass oil to wake up my tired limbs, my favorite scent was actually a calming sandalwood. After a dip in the plunge pool of my Deluxe Treatment Suite, it was time for the sandalwood to work its magic.

[marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)

Six Senses Spa at Soneva Fushi



Courtesy of Soneva Fushi (2)

Cross the scattered slabs of stone to your treatment room made of rustic, reclaimed wood and cooling tiles tucked inside a tropical jungle. This award-winning spa combines science and holistic approaches to reach the ultimate state of relaxation.

From a Hot Stone Massage to a Rose Crystal Lymphatic Facial, it's all good. I mean, really, really good. After my 30-minute Relaxed Feet Massage, my baby-smooth tootsies practically glided across the sand.

soneva.com/resorts/soneva-fushi

Spa Retreat by Conrad Maldives Rangali Island



Courtesy of Conrad Maldives Rangali Island

One of the larger spas I've visited in the Maldives, it has nine overwater treatment rooms decked out in teak.

Its signature treatments include selecting a color — ranging from violet, representing regeneration, to orange, representing energy. Depending on which you choose, a 120-minute journey of bliss composed of four treatments like a tailored scalp massage and body exfoliation awaits. If you're feeling extra jet-lagged, the four-hand massage works wonders.

conradmaldives.com

Waldorf Astoria Spa at Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi



Courtesy of Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi (2)

Everything at the new Waldorf Astoria Ithaafushi is impressive, including the spa. Inside is a well-manicured garden leading to treatment rooms hanging over the ocean with the largest glass bottom floors I've seen in the Maldives.

Another first for the Maldives is the brand new Aqua Wellness Centre with hydrotherapy pool, sauna, steam room and ice fountain. There is also a Wellness Concierge service, a unique consultation process to target your most prominent problems, whether remedied with an Office Syndrome Release Massage or a 24-Carat Gold Facial.

waldorfastoria3.hilton.com

Meera Spa at Gili Lankanfushi



Courtesy of Gili Lankanfushi

You'll feel an instant calm wash over you as you walk the jetty to this six-treatment-room overwater oasis. Its reclaimed natural wood and rustic, chic vibe make it one of my favorite spas in the Maldives.

The smell of frangipani and lemongrass stayed on my skin long after my Meera Signature massage, while the combination of Hawaiian, Thai and Shiatsu techniques left me feeling like a big ball of soft clay. Watching the spa's resident pufferfish, floating in view of the glass bottom beneath my treatment table was a fun bonus.

gili-lankanfushi.com

The Spa at Velassaru Maldives



Courtesy of Velassaru Maldives

This spa has it all, from a whopping 10 individual overwater treatment rooms to a dreamy hydrotherapy pool with lagoon views. On offer are a plethora of body-melting treatments including facials by Elemis, a Lime & Ginger Salt Scrub and a Thousand Flower Detox Wrap.

When in doubt, the signature massage never fails. The Velessaru Signature involved groan-inducing coconut tools mixed with nourishing coconut oil that gave me seriously soft skin.

velassaru.com

Drift Spa at Niyama Private Islands Maldives





land. Partnered with skincare brand Elemis, its facials use a BIOTEC machine to penetrate deep into the skin tissue for an uber-hydrating facial. If you're keeping things a bit less invasive, Anne Semonin facials offer some serious anti-aging magic.

My Niyama Signature massage with lavender essential oils was the first time I ever fell asleep during a spa treatment. That's saying something.

niyama.com

FLOW by Patina Maldives, Fari Islands





Courtesy of The Patina Maldives, Fari Islands (2)

For No. 15, an admission: I haven't actually been to this spa yet (thanks, Covid), but colleagues and friends alike tell me it's simply sublime. One of the newest resorts in the Maldives has an incredible relaxation room decorated with a water lily-filled pond, pebble-stone floor and sunlight filtered through wooden profiles that play with light and shadow throughout the day. It includes a hammam spa, flotation tank suite and hydrotherapy pools, as well as unique IRIS sound immersion technology to help you reach your 'flow state.'

patinahotels.com/maldives-fari-islands



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